Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends,

As with the majority of you, this was not how I expected to be spending this Lenten time, nor the Easter season, however Government guidance and the discernment of both the connexional team and the Circuit has been to cease all acts of worship and those aspects of our church life deemed non-essential (while we may wish to consider the term non-essential, in this instance it simply means ***everything*** that isn’t a Foodbank or a Night Shelter.) Over time, (weeks, not days) the church might begin to look at what is can cautiously offer to the community as a space for prayer, but only once we are certain that all aspects of safety and hygiene have been considered and implemented, and that the risks to volunteers, congregation and public are minimised.

This leads us as the people of God to pray into the situation we find ourselves within, respect and uphold Government guidance, as part of our mutual care to one another, and to reflect on what God is doing with the church and its people at this time. Fundamentally, the church now continues, but as a dispersed community of followers. Our actions and activity within the community call us to act as the servant Christ in the ways we can. For those who are more susceptible to this Virus, or who are more vulnerable to its effects, we must offer that service while being significantly aware of our vulnerability, not placing ourselves into situations or events that could lead to us taking up critical bed spaces or risking further infections to those we love and serve as home or within our communities. The one thing we can all do is pray, pray for those engaged in critical roles, for those isolated, those afraid and those acting to aid our community.

Regarding worship, it is my hope to provide materials from the Circuit or other places on a frequent basis these, alongside pastoral letters will be sent to those not online through doorstep drop offs, we’ll also be developing online resources all of which will be available through the new Circuit Facebook page www.facebook.com/NCMethodists we’ll also be sending out letters and materials via email.

Yet at this time, one thing is clear, we sit within the time of lent, the time where we remember the struggles of Christ, the ministry he offered to fearful and uncertain people under the oppression of the time, it is a time when we recognise the pain of death, confoundment of disciples and their disarray at the situation around them. But is also the time when we recognise the life Christ offered, his death giving us life, the hope found in the God who journeyed with humanity, laughed and cried with them and still now journeys with us. As we approach Easter, which might look so very different to our normal celebration, we can still find hope in the God who loved us so much as to journey into our broken world and restore it, more so that God continues that restoration project still now, and that in God’s good time, all will be restored once more.

If you want to stay up to date with online resources, please keep checking:

The Circuit Website – www.northcheshiremethodists.org.uk

Church website – www.helsbymethodist.org.uk

Circuit Facebook Page – [www.facebook.com/NCMethodists](http://www.facebook.com/NCMethodists)

Church Facebook page – https://www.facebook.com/helsbymethodistchurch

The Methodist Website – https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/seasons-and-themes/worship-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/

Isolation at this time is also going to test people significantly, so please phone each other, DO NOT VISIT without prior agreement from the person and then hold ALL aspects of social distancing in place, this again is about mutual care. It is with sadness I have to say that I will have to isolate during this situation due to underlying heath concerns, and therefore I won’t be about in the village at this time.

Please know my continued prayers with you at this difficult time

 Rev’d David Bintliff